Picking plants for food and medicine was and still is part of our lifestyle. We have [...] studied plants and their medicinal uses for generations. We have [...] preserved the knowledge of traditional plants as an intellectual right given to us by our ancestors. As technology advances, and industry moves further north, we are beginning to lose control of the very land on which our medicines grow. (Richardson 2003, pt. 1, 1).

These words of Métis elder Rose Richardson, of Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, illustrate the deep attachment of the Métis to their land in western Canada, their extensive knowledge of this environment, and their concern for the future in the face of ongoing resource exploration and development. In 2004, in its Haida Nation and Taku River Tlingit decisions, the Supreme Court of Canada established the duty of government to consult and accommodate Aboriginal peoples whose rights or title may be infringed upon by proposed resource development. These decisions hinged on section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982, which recognizes and affirms “the existing
aboriginal and treaty rights” of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples, who are defined in section 35(2) as “the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples.”

The Constitution Act did not explicitly define what constitutes Aboriginal rights. In R. v. Van der Peet, however, the Supreme Court determined that, in order to be considered an Aboriginal right, “an activity must be an element of a practice, custom or tradition integral to the distinctive culture of the aboriginal group claiming the right” ([1996] 2 SCR 507 at 509). The Van der Peet decision further recognized that, owing to historical differences between the Métis and other Aboriginal groups, the “manner in which the aboriginal rights of other aboriginal peoples are defined is not necessarily determinative of the manner in which the aboriginal rights of the Métis are defined” (510). In the context of Métis rights, the key legal decision to date is R. v. Powley ([2003] 2 SCR 207), with reference to a dispute that arose after a Métis father and son were charged with illegally killing a moose. In its decision, the Supreme Court not only recognized the Métis right to hunt for food but also laid out ten criteria—the Powley test—for establishing the existence of a Métis right. In connection with one of these criteria, the Court stated: “In addition to demographic evidence, proof of shared customs, traditions, and a collective identity is required to demonstrate the existence of a Métis community that can support a claim to site-specific aboriginal rights” (para. 23). The decision further stipulated that “the test for Métis practices should focus on identifying those practices, customs and traditions that are integral to the Métis community’s distinctive existence and relationship to the land” (para. 37).

It was within this legal context that the Supreme Court’s decisions in the Haida Nation and Taku River Tlingit cases were taken. To date, however, the implementation of the Crown’s duty to consult and accommodate has been

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1 The two cases in question—Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests), [2004] 3 SCR 511, and Taku River Tlingit First Nation v. British Columbia (Project Assessment Director), [2004] 3 SCR 550—pertained to First Nations whose rights had not been recognized by treaty. The duty to consult was further elaborated the following year in Mikisew Cree First Nation v. Canada (Minister of Canadian Heritage), [2005] 3 SCR 288, a case that involved a signatory of Treaty 8. For discussion, see Newman 2009.

2 The Powley test is an adaptation of the principles laid out in R. v. Van der Peet for determining what constitutes an Aboriginal right in the case of First Nations and Inuit.

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uneven, especially with regard to the Métis (see Teillet 2008). Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario have developed consultation guidelines that explicitly include the Métis, as do the federal guidelines (Canada 2011). At the opposite end of the spectrum, British Columbia refuses to recognize a legal obligation to consult with Métis people “as the Province is of the view that no Métis community is capable of successfully asserting site specific Section 35 rights in B.C.” (British Columbia 2010, 9). Somewhat ironically, Alberta—the only province in Canada to have granted a legal land base to the Métis (Alberta 2000)—has yet to develop consultation procedures for use with Métis communities (see Conroy and Hansen 2015). At least in part, this delay reflects the fact that, in Alberta, “responsibility for carrying out consultations with Aboriginal peoples has in most cases been delegated to industry and incorporated into the environmental assessment process” (Métis Nation of Alberta 2009, 1).

Even though consultation processes, including those that surround environmental impact assessments, typically stress the need to recognize and respect traditional ecological knowledge, Métis contributions to that knowledge remain relatively unexplored, as indeed does the question of whether the label “Indigenous knowledge” can adequately capture Métis ways of knowing (Chrétien and Murphy 2009, 1). Given the historical bias of ethnographic research toward men, the knowledge held by Métis women is especially apt to be ignored and/or marginalized—knowledge that is essential to fulfilling the need to identify “those practices, customs and traditions that are integral to the Métis community’s distinctive existence and relationship to the land,” as well as many of the other criteria laid out in the Powley test. The neglect of Métis women’s knowledge is, of course, illustrative of a broader trend. Relatively little research in Canada has been devoted to Indigenous women’s knowledge of the environment and their roles and responsibilities with regard to the harvesting of resources, stewardship of the land, and governance of the land, and their perspectives are typically undervalued, if not missing entirely, in land claims and resource and land use plans. Despite the recognition that both men and women are involved in multiple activities on the land and that these activities are often complementary, most of the work performed by women remains poorly documented and hence poorly understood.

Especially given that access to and control over resources lie at the heart of Indigenous concerns about the recognition of their rights, an urgent need
exists for gender-sensitive research into traditional land use. In an article written in 1999, Paul Nadasdy observed (1999, 1) that “the widespread recognition that something called ‘traditional ecological knowledge’ even exists represents, in itself, an important first step toward the full participation of aboriginal communities in the management of land and resources.” But this recognition is only a first step. Writing about water policy in Australia, Linda Wirf, April Campbell, and Naomi Rea (2008, 511) point out that failing to pay attention to women’s environmental knowledge can lead to the “potential breakdown of carefully synchronized environmental management strategies that depend on the implicit links between men’s and women’s complementary and dialogical knowledges and practices.” Indeed, effective environmental consultation requires a holistic approach, which demands that we bring women’s knowledge and activities into the centre of inquiry, rather than allowing them to remain at the periphery.

In an effort to offset this gender eclipse, I focus in this chapter on Métis women’s knowledge of the land, with particular attention to the medical expertise of Métis women in western Canada. In so doing, I hope to demonstrate the range and depth of the traditional knowledge Métis women have of their environment and thus render visible their complex connection to the land. In turn, by shedding light on the ways in which Métis women conceptualize their relationship to the land and how these relationships may shift over time, I seek to deepen our understanding of Métis identity and the importance of territory to that identity. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 7) points out, “Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized.” In what follows, I hope to illustrate the importance of what she calls “researching back” (7)—that is, using research to challenge dominant historical narratives that have tended to write Indigenous peoples, including the Métis, out of existence.

Colonial Paradigms and Subjugated Knowledges

The authors of a Statistics Canada article on the cultural activities of the Métis define cultural continuity as “the connection that individuals feel with their cultural past, as well as their projections of that culture into the future” (Kumar and Janz 2010, 63). Noting that research on cultural continuity has so far focused primarily on First Nations, they list a number of factors—“Aboriginal language knowledge, land claims, self-government, availability of cultural facilities, and the provision of culturally appropriate
education, health, police and fire services”—that contribute to cultural continuity among First Nations (63). Seeking to identify factors that generate cultural continuity among the Métis, the authors examine participation in traditional harvesting activities (hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering plants) and the consumption of traditional foods, engagement in Métis arts and crafts and other cultural activities, as well as membership in a Métis organization, a commitment to spiritual practices, and the knowledge of an Aboriginal language.

Like Aboriginal women elsewhere, Métis women in western Canada contribute in many ways to the ongoing transmission of knowledge on which cultural continuity depends. They continue to engage in the practices taught to them by their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts, while in turn teaching their own daughters, granddaughters, and nieces. At the same time, partly in response to the pressures of colonization and industrialization, Métis women have also participated in the creation of new knowledge. “Traditional” cultures are often wrongly assumed to be static, as if tradition were something immutable, when, in reality, all cultures continually innovate. As Marlene Brant Castellano (2000, 24) observes, “a constant testing of knowledge in the context of current reality creates the applications that make timeless truths relevant to each generation.”

Whereas early European explorers often depended for their survival on the knowledge held by Aboriginal guides, settler-colonists embarked on a process of delegitimizing Aboriginal knowledge. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 26) points out, European colonizers “established systems of rule and forms of social relations” that structured their interaction with those colonized, whether in Canada or elsewhere. The colonial imposition of “order,” whereby Indigenous peoples’ reality was reconstituted within Western frames of reference (political, legal, economic, social, ideological), created

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3 I use “Métis” to refer to the peoples who descend from the historic Métis Nation and therefore share a culture and a history. From its beginnings in the Red River settlement, the Métis homeland came to extend across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and into parts of British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Ontario, as well as south into Montana and North Dakota. Historically, the Métis spoke many Indigenous languages—such as Cree or Ojibwe or other local Aboriginal languages—but they were associated in particular with the Michif language, a mixture of French and Cree. The Prairie Métis people also used Michif-Cree and Bungee (consisting of Gaelic and Cree mixed with French and Saulteaux).
a cultural disorder that disconnected people from their land, their languages, their knowledge, and their histories. In the case of the Métis, their political marginalization at the hands of the Canadian state has further contributed to the suppression of cultural knowledge.

Western epistemologies continue to dominate and define the boundaries of legitimate knowledge. In this view, traditional knowledge “is assumed to be qualitative, intuitive, holistic, and oral” and is held to be the antithesis of scientific knowledge, which “is seen as quantitative, analytical, reductionist, and literate” (Nadasdy 1999, 2; see also Lévesque 2004). Even when the values of traditional knowledge are recognized (i.e. Indigenous ontologies and related ethics), researchers are prone to analyze and classify it. As Julie Cruikshank (1998, 50) aptly puts it, traditional knowledge “continues to be presented as an object for science rather than a system of knowledge that could inform science.” As an object, traditional knowledge can, moreover, be repurposed. In the context of environmental impact assessments, for example, traditional knowledge is selected, framed, and prioritized by the development project under review, which also imposes geographic boundaries and sets timelines. This, in turn, shapes what can or should be studied, and, by extension, what will be left out (Usher [2000] 2003, 44).

The discourse surrounding traditional knowledge is thus intimately concerned with power. Michel Foucault argues that power cannot be dissociated from knowledge. The possession of knowledge confers the power to control, but the power to control confers the ability to know—to gather knowledge, to dictate its relative value, to determine who has access to it, and to use it to exercise power more efficiently. In other words, relations of power generate what Foucault calls regimes of truth, forms of discourse whereby knowledge is variously legitimated or subjugated by those who hold power.4 Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of “legitimate” language adds another dimension to the relationship between knowledge and power. Bourdieu (1991, 45) argues that “the official language is bound up with the state, both in its genesis and in its social uses. It is in the process of state formation that the conditions are created for the constitution of a unified linguistic market, dominated by the official language.” To participate in processes of negotiations or

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consultations, as Nadasdy (2003, 5) points out, Aboriginal peoples have no choice but to conform “to the very particular forms and formalities of the official linguistic fields of wildlife management, Canadian property law, and so forth.”

Thus, while Indigenous peoples may be given the opportunity to speak, this does not mean that what they say will be valued, or even that it will necessarily be understood. Gayatri Spivak ([1988] 1994) questions whether the subaltern can ever speak—a question that applies doubly to women, given that, in colonial historiography, “the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant” (82). “If, in the context of colonial production,” she argues, “the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (82–83). Unsurprisingly, given the deeply patriarchal structures of the Canadian state, Aboriginal women have occupied only a marginal role in political negotiations (and that only quite recently), and their perspectives are largely missing in land use studies, environmental monitoring, and wildlife management.

As Gerdine Van Woudenberg (2004, 82) argues, the persistence of the colonial portrayal of Aboriginal women as landless and consigned to domestic space further serves to perpetuate the subordination of female to male. The structures of power in a patriarchal colonial environment have created what Foucault terms “subjugated knowledges”—“a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity” (1980, 82). Vrinda Dalmiya and Linda Alcoff (1993) argue that, within Western societies, legitimate knowledge has been constructed so as to deny epistemological validity to the traditional knowledge held by women. Thus, for instance, knowledge about childbearing and child rearing or about herbal medicines is generally dismissed as “old wives’ tales,” which, because perceived as unscientific, fail to receive “the honorific status of knowledge” (217). It is therefore important to unravel the subjugated, or “disqualified,” knowledge that arises out of

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5 Foucault elaborates his concept of an “insurrection” of subjugated knowledges in “Two Lectures” (Foucault 1980, 78–108; see esp. 81–84). For a critique from a feminist perspective, see Sawicki (1991). Foucault, she writes, “never spoke of ‘male domination’ per se; he usually spoke of power as if it subjugated everyone equally” (49).
the experience of oppression, to turn our attention to “relations not always visible” (Gordon 2006, 431).

Van Woudenberg (2004, 82) raises a number of thought-provoking questions about the position of Aboriginal women not only as participants in negotiations surrounding Aboriginal rights and title but also as historical actors with agency. As we have seen, in Canada, it falls to the courts (especially the Supreme Court) to define precisely what constitutes Aboriginal rights and by whom these rights can be claimed. Van Woudenberg argues that, because the relevant legal decisions have primarily focused on hunting and fishing, these activities have come to be regarded as fundamental to Aboriginal cultures, while other activities on the land, notably those in which women engage, are relegated to a secondary position, as if to imply that Aboriginal people themselves regard women’s activities as accessory to men’s. In the context of Métis rights, the Powley case, which turned on subsistence hunting, is an apt illustration. As Van Woudenberg (2004, 81) warns, “The silence surrounding women’s traditional relations with the land could easily be used to disinherit them legally in the present.” Political participation is an essential component of access to, allocation of, and control over resources. Métis women may (and do) perceive their relationship to the land as essential to community well-being. Yet, even though Métis women have sometimes provided valuable information about traditional knowledge in connection with legal proceedings, their own activities continue to be virtually invisible in the courts as well as in the realm of research, including land use studies.

Knowledge may also be rendered invisible because it exists in marginalized spaces. In the West, “legitimate” sites of knowledge are almost entirely public, perhaps because the public sphere is also the male sphere. As Van Woudenberg suggests, the colonial projection of a fundamentally Western equation, that of women with domestic space, onto Aboriginal cultures has had the effect of erasing women from sites of knowledge in which they do not “belong.” Similar to the public sphere, the “wilderness” was, and still is, coded male. As a result, places where women hunt and fish, harvest berries, and pick medicinal plants (as well as those where they traditionally gave

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6 “[…] le « silence » entourant les relations traditionnelles des femmes à la terre pourrait bien servir à les déshériter légalement dans le présent” (81). The translation is mine.
birth) have been ignored. Women have therefore been similarly effaced from the bodies of discourse surrounding these activities and thus from the legal frameworks and the spiritual traditions associated with them. In part, then, the neglect of Aboriginal women’s knowledge may reflect the fact that it often exists in places where non-Aboriginal people do not expect to find it.

Among Aboriginal peoples, place is inseparably intertwined with cultural identity and sense of self. Writing on Western Apache language and culture, Keith Basso (1990, 133) argues that “conceptions of the land work in specific ways to influence Apaches’ conceptions of themselves (and vice versa),” with the two then working together “to influence patterns of social action.” As he further observes, “Knowledge of places is therefore closely linked to knowledge of the self, to grasping one’s position in the larger scheme of things, including one’s own community, and to securing a confident sense of who one is as a person” (1996, 34). This knowledge is conveyed in place names and through stories about specific locations on the land, and this naming and storytelling serve to fuse past and present. Whereas Western histories seek to reconstruct the sequence of past events, “what matters most to Apaches is where events occurred, not when” (31). History—or what Basso aptly calls “the country of the past” (32)—is not a matter of relics. Rather, “the place-maker’s main objective is to speak the past into being, to summon it with words and give it dramatic form, to produce experience, forging ancestral worlds in which others can participate and readily lose themselves” (32).

This perspective is by no means unique to the Western Apache—nor has this intimate relationship to the land ever been the sole preserve of men. Rather than reinforce colonial conceptions of gender, in which men’s activities on the land somehow become more essential than women’s, we need to understand how Aboriginal women perceived their connection to the land and to their cultural heritage. In this context, it becomes all the more important to examine Métis women’s ways of knowing the land as well as their ways of speaking it—of giving voice to the experiences through which their relationship to the land is continually renewed and made present.

“Our Land is Our Life”

Words such as displacement, dispossession, and migration are often used to describe the experiences of the Métis people after the events of 1869–70 at Red River, in present-day Manitoba. The events were triggered by the Hudson’s Bay Company’s transfer of the vast northwest territory of Rupert’s
Land to the Canadian government without prior consultation with the people who lived on these lands. Concerned, the Métis, through a provisional government led by Louis Riel, negotiated terms for entering Confederation. As a result of these negotiations, the province of Manitoba was created by the Manitoba Act (1870). Section 31 of the Manitoba Act promised the Métis 1.4 million acres of land, to be redeemed in the form of scrip—government-issued certificates good for land or a cash equivalent. Because this system operated by doling out individual parcels of land (for which the Métis were obliged to compete with white settlers), it effectively denied the Métis a collective land base. Over a period of roughly fifty years, moreover, the Métis lost most of the land promised to them, chiefly at the hands of white speculators who cheated individuals and families out of their scrip.7

After 1870, the Métis were made to feel strangers in their own land. From the late nineteenth century onward, landless Métis moved from one locale to another across the Prairie provinces, endeavouring to eke out a livelihood. Some families moved further west while others relocated in other areas in Manitoba. Many new Métis communities were founded, but even these were not immune to actions on the part of government, and the Métis themselves were often the target of racial discrimination. Early in the twentieth century, for example, a number of Métis families founded a community at Ste-Madeleine, in western Manitoba. As was often the case, the community was located on lands that were not especially well suited to agriculture. All the same, after Parliament passed the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act in 1935, which was intended to encourage drought-stricken white farmers of the Depression era to remain on the prairies and continue to farm, the Métis from Ste-Madeleine—perceived as “squatters”—were forced to relocate, and their community was burned (see Zeilig and Zeilig 1987). While the events at Ste-Madeleine are perhaps an especially egregious example, they are part of a well-recognized pattern of dispossession.

Yet despite this history of displacement, Métis people have maintained a very strong connection to the land and, more generally, to the Northwest, carrying with them knowledge systems integral to their culture. In “Métis and Feminist,” Emma LaRocque (2007, 57) speaks of the experiences of her

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people, the Apeetowganuk (or “half-sons” in Cree), and their deep emotional attachment to the land:

My parents, aunts and uncles all spoke of “scrip” and how Apeetowganuk lost and were continuing to lose beloved domains of lands either through scrip or simply through urban, industrial and farming encroachments. Legally, we did not own any land but in those years we could still definitely live on, from and with the land, for morally, it was our land. My grandparents occupied, used and loved this land long before Confederation, and my father was born before Alberta became a province. My parents’ generation made a living from the many resources of the land, including hunting and trapping, as well as wage labour, wherever such could be found.

According to Métis elder Lucy Desjarlais Whiteman, “Women never stopped talking about the lost lands. They were more bitter than the men who were told there was more land and they believed that” (quoted in Shilling 1983, 90–91). The ontological relationship that Métis people have with the land is still very much at the centre of their political and collective aspirations. Historically, the Métis way of life depended on the existence of open spaces—territory across which they could travel freely, hunting, fishing, and gathering plants. The encroachment of settlers gradually reduced this mobility. For women healers, limitations on mobility required modifications to recipes for medicines, the ingredients for which might originally have been scattered over a wide area. In Our Knowledge Is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings, Wendy Makoons Geniusz (2009, 119–20) speaks of the need to modernize recipes by substituting new products and of using new technologies—such as “iron knives, pots, and axes” and in the twentieth century “blenders, supermarket bags, and pocketknives—to gather botanical materials and manufacture medicines (119).

The elders interviewed for In the Words of Our Ancestors: Métis Health and Healing (Métis Centre 2008) testify to the central role that Métis women played in the well-being of their communities. Métis mothers and grandmothers were teachers and role models, and they remained so even beyond the grave, as the knowledge they shared was stored in the memory of their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. This knowledge belongs to the future as well as to the past: the elders often emphasized that traditional knowledge, while rooted in ancient stories and oral histories, is current, contemporary, and sustainable. All the same, many elders and community
members throughout western Canada are worried about the future. Further fragmentation of the land is occurring as a result of development, while pollution, environmental change, and the simple destruction of open spaces have led to the relative disappearance of certain plant species, as well as to reductions in the availability of fish and game. In addition, pharmaceutical companies have begun to take a proprietary interest in medicinal plants. As elder Rose Richardson pointed out in the comment that opens this chapter, in the face of resource development, the Métis sense that they are losing control over their traditional lands and, by extension, over the knowledge associated with the plants that grow on those lands. She went out to say that “in many cases the information taken from our people has become patented or copyrighted without giving recognition to our people and to our ancestors” (Richardson 2003, pt. 1, 1). As Ikechi Mgbeoji (2006, ix) argues biopiracy thrives “in a cultural milieu in which non-Western forms of knowledge are systematically marginalized and devalued as ‘folk knowledge.’” The appropriation and the privatization of plants—through patents—continues to favour the dominant narrative of Western epistemology by not crediting the intellectual contributions of Indigenous people.

A poll conducted in 2002 by the National Aboriginal Health Organization revealed that 80 percent of the eight hundred Métis who participated in the survey felt that the revitalization of Aboriginal traditions was essential to improving current health care. And yet roughly 60 percent said that they did not know where to find traditional remedies or did not have access to traditional healers (Edge and McCallum 2006, 86–87). In 2006, the Aboriginal Peoples Survey discovered that, on average, fewer than three out of ten Métis (29 percent) had gathered wild plants during the previous twelve months, with the proportion declining from a high of 35 percent among people aged forty-five to fifty-four to 24 percent among people aged fifteen to nineteen (Kumar and Janz 2010, 64 and chart 1). These numbers suggest that Métis today may be at risk of losing their connection to the land.

The fact that roughly 70 percent of Canada’s Métis now live in urban areas helps to explain in part this disconnect with the land (Canada 2013, 8).

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8 Among Métis living in rural areas, the proportion rose to 41 percent (Kumar and Janz 2010, 64). Although the survey indicated that men and women were equally likely to report having gathered plants, it did not ask whether the plants were intended for food or for medicinal purposes.
However, other factors have also been at play. The elders who contributed to *In the Words of Our Ancestors* speak of many losses their people have experienced in the wake of colonization. Common themes were

- loss of Aboriginal identity;
- loss of Aboriginal languages;
- death of family members from infectious diseases;
- loss of access to land and resources;
- loss of access to hunting, fishing and trapping;
- loss of traditional teachings;
- experiences with violence and abuse;
- loss of parenting skills;
- influences of religion and/or churches;
- experiences of attending Residential School;
- or of relocation or displacement from ancestral lands. (Métis Centre 2008, 14–15)

The elders also emphasized the importance of regaining and revitalizing traditional teachings for the benefit of families and communities. Speaking about traditional medicine, elder Norman Fleury commented,

> For those that want to know, it is a teaching. Some of our people have been so far removed from that. Our grandmother was a medicine woman. But now we are so far removed from it, all they know now is peppermint tea. They don’t know the other medicines, but they’ll talk about it. This will be a good start to try to teach it again. (Métis Centre 2008, 42)

Acknowledging the emotional and spiritual aspects of healing, he also underscored the need for a commitment to understanding traditional medicine as an integrated system of knowledge: “Now I have to say to myself, how interested am I to retrieve some of those medicines, those traditional herbs, and who is going to put them in proper perspective, or is it just a story?” (Métis Centre 2008, 44). From the perspective of gender, one might wonder how the loss of knowledge identified by Fleury has affected Métis women and their connection to the land, as well as their status within their communities and their ability to sustain traditional values.

In a study on berry harvesting among Gwich’in women, Brenda Parlee and her colleagues argue that berry picking connects these women “to their mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual selves, to each other and to the land” (Parlee, Berkes, and the Teet’lit Gwich’in Renewable Resources Council 2005, 132). The women who took part in the study perceived berries as having both nutritional and medicinal value (132), and they also spoke of “the benefits of going out on the land with family and friends and working together” (133). As the research evolved, other important elements became apparent,
such as a strong sense of cultural continuity and stewardship of the land. For many of the women, the practice of berry picking was a legacy passed on from generation to generation. They would go back to the same berry patches “to remember and respect their mothers and grandmothers who were there before them,” and they expressed the hope that their children and grandchildren “will continue to go to these places and remember them there also” (133). These women also perceived themselves as stewards of the land, maintaining cabin sites and trails to specific berry patches, and felt a strong pride of ownership. Through berry harvesting, Gwich’in women participate in the governance of the land. A few “suggested that their berry patches should be protected under the Gwich’in land use plan or other Gwich’in laws to ensure that their children and future generations would be able to harvest berries in those places,” and they were also concerned about the impact of climate change (134). In short, the study demonstrated how women’s relationship to the land is bound up with values that are integral to the well-being not only of their families and communities but also of the environment.

Although Métis women’s experiences may differ in their details from those of Gwich’in women, research such as this can provide valuable insights into how women situate themselves in their relation to the land and the world. It can also help us to grasp the scale at which the women’s knowledge of the environment is produced and to understand activities such as berry picking and plant picking as practices bound by rules and laws. As John Briggs and Joanne Sharpe (2004, 667) point out, by focusing on the deeper ways of knowing embedded in such activities, one is able to understand “the worldview of the people involved, such as understanding of social justice, gender relations, familial responsibilities, and so on.” While berry picking might easily be dismissed as supplementary food gathering, in the Gwich’in world it is an activity that opens a window onto social, cultural, legal, economic, and spiritual relationships.

**Lii Michin: The Medical Knowledge of Métis Women**

Knowledge of medicine was accumulated over centuries by the Aboriginal peoples of North America on the basis of observation and experimentation. An overemphasis on the role of the “medicine man” has, however, obscured the extent to which women were involved in family and community health. Until fairly recently, this effacement of Aboriginal women’s medical knowledge extended even to histories of midwifery (Lux 2001, 97). Attempting to
insert Aboriginal women back into history, Kristin Burnett (2011, 157) argues that, even as the settlement of the Prairie West in the latter part of the nineteenth century worked to create a social order that marginalized Aboriginal women, newly arriving European-Canadian women “took advantage of the obstetrical expertise of Aboriginal women,” relying on them “to aid them as midwives, caregivers, and healers.” Similarly, Maureen Lux (2001, 97) observes that “until the 1920s, immigrant women on homesteads were rarely attended in childbirth by a physician” and that, even when a doctor was available, fees were high. In addition, given that physicians—who were, of course, overwhelmingly male—were “not necessarily seen as competent” to deliver babies, women often preferred to rely on the expertise of an Aboriginal midwife (97). As Burnett (2011, 160) explains, the practice of obstetrics was not held in especially high regard within the emerging Western medical profession, and physicians were thus apt to have had relatively little obstetrical training. Moreover, aside from those who might earlier have acquired some knowledge of nursing or midwifery, European-Canadian women living on Prairie homesteads typically had little or no experience with the delivery of babies—in contrast to Aboriginal midwives, who “underwent significant apprenticeship and training, which usually began at a young age” (160; see also Burnett 2010). What Burnett and Lux describe for First Nations women applies equally to Métis women’s medical knowledge.

“One of the most damaging legacies of the colonial project in western Canada,” writes Burnett (2011, 158), “has been the discursive erasure of Aboriginal women from the landscape after the 1870s.” Since the pioneering work of Jennifer Brown (1980) and Sylvia Van Kirk (1980), considerable emphasis has been placed on defining the historical roles of Aboriginal women during the fur trade era. During roughly the same period, interest in the field of Métis studies and Métis history has grown and diversified considerably. To date, researchers have been concerned mainly with the

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9 As settlement progressed, however, efforts were made to suppress the activities of Aboriginal midwives and healers. Such was the case for Métis midwife and healer Marie Rose Delorme Smith. As her daughter, Mary Hélène (Smith) Parfitt, recalled, “Marie Rose had put in many years of midwifery and the doctors were disgruntled at not being called to deliver the babies. Soon Marie Rose had a letter from officials in Edmonton telling her that she must desist from this practice” (quoted in Carpenter 1977, 149). Similarly, Lux (2001, 96) notes that “on reserves where medical missionaries had established hospitals, Native midwives were seen as unwelcome competition.”
Red River resistance and the central figure of Louis Riel or with the reasons that the Métis left the province of Manitoba after 1870 (see, for example, Sprague 1988; Flanagan 1991; Ens 1996; Bumsted 2001). Attention has also focused on issues surrounding Métis identity and Métis rights (for example, Wilson and Mallet 2008; Andersen 2014). Studies of Métis women are still relatively rare, however (see Payment 1990; Racette 2004; Kermoal 2006; St-Onge 2008; Iseke-Barnes 2009; Macdougall 2010; Andersen, 2011), and rarer still are those that discuss the specific roles that Métis women played in maintaining and passing on their values in relation to the land and its resources (Adese, 2014). This discursive erasure necessitates the process of “researching back” that Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 7) proposes.

Although it is impossible, at this point, to trace specific lines of transmission, Métis women built upon a large corpus of medical knowledge inherited from their First Nations ancestors, and with that knowledge came many obligations. As David Newhouse (2004, 151) observes, “When a person comes into a relationship with certain knowledge, he or she is not only transformed by it, but must assume responsibility for it.” Métis medical knowledge—*lii michin*, “the medicines”—was often passed on from mother to daughter, grandmother to granddaughter, auntie to niece, or a woman might acquire such knowledge from a respected elder in the community. Women cared for and gave medical advice to men, as well as women and children, and their activities were integral to the health and well-being of the community. Since illnesses are part of everyday life, women’s knowledge and skills were indispensable.

Expertise in medicine was primarily associated with “grandmothers” (*nokoms*) because they were no longer occupied with raising their children—even though they often took care of grand-children—and no longer fell under the taboos surrounding menstruation (Niethammer 1977, 146). Many of these women became respected midwives, although not all women proved to be suited to midwifery: the test was often the first delivery of a baby. In an interview, Elsie (Hourie) Bear explains that older women tried to teach her “because they wanted it to go on from generation to generation [...] and I went with my grandmother and the first time she took me, I ran away. I didn’t want no part of that” (quoted in Kermoal 2006, 145). Most women were, however, adept in the use of homemade remedies. Métis author and elder Maria Campbell (2011) remembers that, in her family, herbs and medicines were stored in cotton bags that were hung from the rafters of the
cellar. “Although our nokoms did most of the doctoring,” she writes, “every mother had her own stash of medicines used for croups, coughs, fevers and any number of childhood illnesses.” For more serious illnesses, however, a woman who had earned a reputation as a healer would be consulted.

The names of some of these women have come down to us. The mother of Victoria Belcourt Callihoo (1861–1966) was a recognized healer at the time of the great buffalo hunts, who cared for the sick and the injured and whose expertise was greatly valued (MacEwan 1995, 191). Callihoo’s contemporary, Marie Rose Delorme Smith (1861–1960), who lived most of her life in the Pincher Creek area of southern Alberta, said nothing about her role as a healer in her written reminiscences, but family members recall that she “was known as a ‘medicine woman’ to many First Nations people, who reportedly travelled for miles to seek her remedies” (MacKinnon 2012, 75; see also Carpenter 1977, 149). Born in 1868, Elise Vivier Boyer, of Fort Ellice (in present-day Manitoba), was another well-known midwife and traditional healer. Known locally as “Mrs. Cha-Cha”—after the nickname of her husband, Norbert Boyer, whom people called “Cat” (cha’-cha’)—she was renowned for treating tuberculosis and women’s miscarriages and hemorrhages (Fleury and Barkwell 2009, 1). Elder Norman Fleury’s grandmother was also a healer, from whom he learned much about traditional medicine:

My grandma, she taught us all these things to respect with, because she lost her mother when she was younger, but she learned, she had medicine people that helped her to learn, lii michin, to learn medicine. [. . .] My grandma brought all of us kids all into this world. There was nobody else. They never saw a doctor, not once. Even miscarriages, she gave them medicines, stuff like that. She also talked to me about when you prepare medicines, the importance of preparing medicines. (Métis Centre 2008, 43)

Although Métis healers sometimes travelled many miles to gather the plants they needed, this was not always the case. Recalling her childhood, Maria Campbell (2011) writes, “Our drug store was half a mile up the road in a meadow called Omisimaw Puskiwa (oldest sister prairie) where yarrow, plantain, wild roses, fireweed, asters, nettles and pigweed could be found in great abundance. Some of it was just medicine and some of it like fireweed, nettles and pigweed was medicine and food.” Indeed, as she goes on to say, food was itself a source of medicine:
I have since come to understand that most everything we ate in those days was medicinal, including the moose and other wild animals. Moose, for example, eat willow and poplar branches all full of medicine. They eat water plantain and dig down deep in the water to eat the water lily and roots, both of which are very important ingredients in some cancer medicines. Bears eat berry and the roots of many plants, making their fat, especially, highly prized by medicine people.

As she suggests, her Métis ancestors were well aware of the way that nutrients are transmitted from animals to human beings and that a healthy diet affords protection against illness.

Every plant was thoroughly studied and experimented so that its qualities were fully understood. For that reason, it was not uncommon for the same plant to serve multiple purposes. For example, according to Lawrence Barkwell (2009, 1), in the fall, usually after the first frost, the Métis would gather the seeds of a shrub known as wolf willow (*Elaeagnus commutate*, also called silver willow, buffalo willow, rosary bush, or silverberry) and use them to make rosaries, bracelets, and necklaces. The bark was used in weaving blankets, clothing, and baskets, while the berries were used in making soap but could also be eaten or used as an ingredient in other foods. In addition, the plant had medicinal properties:

The fruit of the Wolf Willow is a rich source of vitamins and a source of fatty acids. It is rich in vitamins A, C and E. The fruit of the Wolf Willow is being investigated as a food that reduces the incidence of cancer and may even halt or reverse the growth of some cancers. A decoction of the bark mixed with oil is used as a salve for children with frostbite. A decoction of Wolf Willow and sumac roots has been used for syphilis; however, this mixture is quite poisonous and usually causes sterility. (Barkwell 2009, 2)

Wolf willow illustrates the range of knowledge that could accumulate around a single plant.

The grandmothers knew the curative powers of each and every plant. They relied mainly on the land around them to find wild plants and roots that function as painkillers, digestive aids, and anti-inflammatory agents. These were part of a large pharmacopoeia that is still in use today. This knowledge has yet to be systematically documented, but a sense of its range can be gleaned, for example, from the words of respected Métis elder and healer Rose Richardson:
As a child, when we went picking berries, my mother always got us to pick yarrow in case we got stung. Yarrow was used to counteract bee stings and to regulate our sleep. Balsam bark or tamarack were used as a herbal tea to cure ulcers. Since their belief was that ulcers was caused by a bacteria, balsam bark and tamarack are considered to be antibacterial and anti-fungal. Rat root was used to keep your throat clear, to keep your throat clear of infection and to stop coughing. It was also used to prevent tooth, a toothache, and had many other medicinal values. (Richardson 2003, pt. 2, 1)

As elder Madeline Bird writes in *Living Kindness* (1991, 71):

I could talk about so many things and how they can be used. I don’t always know the name, especially the white man’s name, for things in nature, but when I see them out there I know right away which ones are good and which ones are dangerous. That’s the most important to know, because it would be terrible to poison or kill someone when you are really trying to cure them. That’s why it’s best to learn from somebody who really knows, like the elders.

Healers knew which plants or roots were safe and which were not, as well as which plants could be safely combined with others. For elder François King from Fort Resolution, “There are hardly any poisons if you know the right kind of medicines to use. There are two roots that look the same and one of them is poison, but if you know medicine you know which one is good” (Beaulieu 1987, 68).

Plants and roots had to be harvested carefully. Some plants had to be picked at a specific time of day or during a full moon to ensure that they would not be spoiled or their healing powers reduced (Assiniwi 1988, 18; Anderson 2011, 151). Others were best harvested two days after a rain or during the full moon, as elder Rose Fleury, of Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, learned from her grandmother (Anderson 2011, 149). Certain roots had to be picked in the fall, after the leaves of the plant had completely fallen, while others were harvested in the spring. Rose Fleury recalled how her grandmother taught her the correct way to pick medicinal plants:

She would point at the thing. I had to dig away from the bottom. She said, “If you break the root it won’t work as strong. Shake it, don’t pull on it!” And then we would put it in the little cotton. You couldn’t put it in a plastic bag or a paper bag. She always had a little cotton rag and she would tear it into squares. “And don’t take the flower off,” she would tell
Nathalie Kermoal

me. “Leave it there.” It would dry in there and then she would know what kind of medicine it was. (Quoted in Anderson 2011, 151)

Once harvested, herbs, plants, barks, and roots were usually dried, sometimes pickled, and then prepared as herbal tea, decoctions, or powders. In addition, women made ointments by mixing plants or roots with animal fat, fish bones, or oil. Healers understood which plants could be prepared in what way without losing their medicinal properties and in what form a medicine was best administered. As Maria Campbell (2011) recalls, “We drank wild rose hip tea every morning all winter long cause we needed the vitamin C and as I learned from my aunty, wild rose hips do not lose their vitamin content with boiling or cooking.” Medicinal herbs and plants also formed part of the repertoire of midwives. After the birth of a child, the midwife would often prepare an infusion of red ash, using the inner bark of the tree, to help expel the placenta and prevent infection. Herbal tea made with mint and raspberry was used as an analgesic. If a woman was in fragile health, the midwife might recommend an herbal tea—the ingredients in which were known only to midwives—to delay another birth (see Kermoal 2006).

Women were, in short, the repositories of knowledge relating to the medicinal properties of plants. Auguste Vermette (1891–1986) recalled that his mother had all kinds of roots stored in small bags, which she kept in a larger bag (“son sac à tout mett’e”). She did not need to mark the names of the plants because she knew what they were, and she also knew exactly where to find them (Létourneau 1973; see also Ferland 2000, 19). According to Jock Carpenter (1977, 39), women who were accustomed to life on the trail “filled a buckskin bag with pouches of herbs, tea drinks, and poultices,” used for treating minor accidents and illnesses, and “Mother Delorme” (as Marie Rose Delorme Smith was known) evidently had such a medicine bag. In some families, the medicine bag was passed on from one generation to the next. For instance, Justine Beaudry Bellerose (1878–1948), who farmed with her husband in St. Albert (not far from Edmonton), inherited her medicine bag from her mother, Lucie Breland Beaudry (Iseke-Barnes 2009, 97).

Learning about medicine and plants, as well as providing services for the good of the family and the community, meant not only knowing the land, especially the local resources, but also understanding how to manage these resources. Rose Richardson recalled that, when she was young,
the elders would come to see my mother and to borrow me to be their
guide to find medicinal plants. Some plants were so sensitive that they
would become transparent. [...] They would hide from certain people,
or they would simply relocate if they were not respected. One-tenth of
the medicinal plants in each area could be picked to make sure that there
was always plants left to propagate. Plants were not picked during the
flowering season unless the whole plant was used for medicine. (Rich-
ardson 2003, pt. 2, 1)

As Richardson suggests, plants, like people, respond to the treatment they
receive. She went on to say that “land has to be set aside to preserve these
medicines and to allow them to grow in their natural environment” (pt. 2,
2). Grandmothers also shared their knowledge with other Métis healers.
They exchanged knowledge “through dialogue, prayers, and gifts” (quoted
in Anderson 2011, 152).

While they were in the bush to gather medicines, women often visited sites
linked to particular stories or spiritual beliefs. For elder Maria Campbell,
“these women”—the grandmothers she knew as a child—“were all deeply
spiritual rather than religious” (Anderson 2011, xvi). Campbell remembers
going to a place called Old Lady Lake when she was young. As Maria Camp-
bell (quoted in Anderson 2011, 153) explains:

This lake was called Nōtokēw Sākahikan, “Old Lady Lake.” It stands out
in her memory because the children were taught to be quiet and reverent
when visiting there. Even though there was a beautiful beach, they were
not allowed to swim. In speaking to her father many years later, Maria
realized that the reason they called it Nōtokēw Sākahikan was because it
was a place where the old ladies would pick medicines and, in particular,
medicines that they would use in their work with birth and death. Mid-
wives harvested their medicines from this lake, as did those who needed
medicines that could “absorb the smell of death.”

Far from deriving solely from the material properties of the plant, the power
of medicines depended on the attitude with which they were harvested. Fur-
thermore, women would talk to the plants “to ask for both a spiritual as well
as a physical healing for oneself and one’s patient” (Siisip Geniusz 2015, 22).
This understanding of the complex relations between humans and non-hu-
mans is characteristic of Indigenous worldviews. As Rose Richardson puts it:

Being spiritually in tune with your own body and the plants just became
a way of life for us. For example, stinging nettle is used for many
purposes, including the treatment of arthritis. When you are using nettle for healing, it will not sting you. Nettle is whipped on to the aching joints to relieve pain. We never questioned how it happens, you just know it works, and you show gratitude. (Richardson 2003, pt. 2, 1)

The theme of gratitude was echoed by Norman Fleury, who recalled how his grandmother taught him about the need to offer respect to the land when picking medicinal plants: “And when you picked up this medicine, you prayed, and you put tobacco, and it was a spiritual significance and we gave thanks because it was going to heal somebody. So you took and you put back, and those are the kind of things that I learned as a young boy” (Fleury 2003, pt. 3, 3). As he explained on another occasion, at one time, the Métis used tobacco as an offering, as did many First Nations. “Grandma used to use it,” he said, “because you know why? It was a Cree woman that taught her those medicines, so that’s what she used to do, my grandmother” (Métis Centre 2008, 43).

These offerings were made to keep balance in the world. The stories taught to Métis children likewise reminded them of the importance of loving and respecting the land and of acknowledging the interrelatedness of all life. In the words of Maria Campbell (2007), “The stories taught us that we had to observe all the protocols and to never ever forget that there is always reciprocity, meaning you give an offering to receive an offering.” There were, she says, two kinds of stories: ahtyokaywina, or sacred stories, about the origins of life, as well as tahp acimowina, or family histories (Anderson 2011, xv). Campbell (2010) remembers that her great-grandmother, who knew both kinds of stories, “was respected for her ability not only in our community but also far away.” But there were other stories as well, such as those told by “hunters, trappers and gatherers who knew the land intimately and could recount the history and stories of all the places on the land as well as their own adventures on it” (Campbell 2010). These stories underscore the importance of place—or what Keith Basso (1990, 134) has described as a “moral relationship with the land.” As he demonstrates, embedded in stories about places are social and moral lessons, such that—as one Apache woman, Mrs. Annie Peaches, put it—“The land makes people live right” (100).

This relationship with the land was expressed in many ways besides stories. Women were healers, but they were also seamstresses, and they reproduced what they saw in nature as designs on the clothing and other items they made both for their families and as commodities. As Sherry Racette (2004, 160)
notes, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Métis women “continued subsistence production for their own needs while simultaneously producing for a market.” Although, for their floral art, they could choose between Indigenous and imported goods, to this day they still favour “quills, hide, sinew, natural fibres and dyes” (251). Moreover, imported materials were not always available. Thus, for example, the Métis artist Madeleine Bouvier Laferte, born in 1862, developed moose-hair tufting “as a creative solution to the critical shortage of silk and beads during the First World War” (257). For some women, artistic production and medicine went hand in hand. Elizabeth “Betsey” Houle, born in 1874, was described by her granddaughter as a “real herb doctor” who also did porcupine quillwork and whose knowledge of plants was employed to produce both medicines and dyes (258). Women also stress the healing and therapeutic power of beadwork (Racette 2004, 274). Through their own healing, and by choosing in some instances to bead plants and flowers that have curing powers, they are transferring the medicine onto the clothing. By beading the plants used to heal members of the community, they are mapping the territory on leather or fabric as a way of affirming their Métis identity and their role in society.

Métis women’s knowledge of the land is multidimensional since the traditional knowledge pertaining to the use of plants, rhizomes, and berries has many more layers than what is seen on the surface. Most importantly, it is concerned with Indigenous ontologies that stress the interconnectedness of all beings (humans and non-humans). It has spiritual, economic, cultural, environmental, medicinal, and political purposes and meanings. Since it is an evolving knowledge, it also speaks to the innovations of individuals and communities. The land-based practices and activities of these women were adapted to an ever-changing environment, just as stories are constantly retold, and new interpretations layered onto older ones. In some cases, customary practices simply persisted alongside newer ones. The arrival of Western doctors, for example, roughly coincided with the arrival of unfamiliar infectious diseases, such as smallpox, measles, polio, tuberculosis, typhoid, and diphtheria, for which Aboriginal healers knew no cure. This fact did not, however, lead to the abandonment of natural remedies, as these were known to be effective against certain ailments. Other times, circumstances—such as a shortage of silk thread or lack of access to a particular plant—demanded the creation of new knowledge (the technique of moose-hair tufting, a revised recipe). Acknowledging this flexibility, this
responsiveness to change, is integral to a clear understanding of Métis cultural continuity and Métis conceptions of stewardship of the land.

Further research will assist us in grasping the impact of reduced access to the land on Métis women’s lives, on their knowledge, and on their sense of empowerment within their communities. The encroachment of settlers on Métis lands, followed by public and private land policies, restrictions on hunting, attendance at residential schools, and the twin forces of urbanization and industrialization, have obviously conspired to undermine connections to the land and weaken Métis cultural continuity. Other factors are perhaps less obvious: the loss of the Michif language, the participation of both women and men in wage economies, the loss of dietary traditions through the introduction of new food products, and an inability to sustain traditional approaches to stewardship of the resources found on the land. As Nancy Turner and Katherine Turner (2008, 103) note, the cumulative effect of these factors is powerful, and ways need to be found “to retain and reinforce the knowledge and practices still held by individuals and communities, to reverse some of the negative influences on cultural retention, and to develop new, relevant, and effective ways to revitalize languages, cultures, and ethnobotanical knowledge within contemporary contexts.”

The work of Métis artist Christi Belcourt exemplifies the many ways in which knowledge—in this case botanical knowledge—is revitalized. Her floral art in beadwork style is firmly grounded in her Métis ancestral history. She actively listens to elders and gathers scientific information regarding the plants she harvests and paints on canvas (Baird 2010). Belcourt’s paintings can be said to serve a dual purpose: they preserve knowledge shared by elders, while they also provide a tool for teaching younger generations about plants and their properties, thus ultimately reconnecting them with the land (Belcourt 2007). Indeed, as Métis artist Leanne L’Hirondelle (2003, 3) recognizes, Belcourt’s art “speaks of a deep attachment to the land and living things.”

Conclusion

Historically, the federal government (and by extension the provinces) never recognized the collective rights of the Métis through the signing of treaties, as it did in the case of First Nations in western Canada. This refusal to acknowledge the rights of the Métis as a distinct community ended in 2003, when the Powley decision recognized and affirmed the constitutional right
of the Métis to engage in subsistence hunting. The process of determining the scope and the nature of Métis rights is ongoing, however, and, to move toward reconciliation, government, industry, and the Métis will have to work together. For the Métis, moving forward means that, as far as development is concerned, consultation and ultimately accommodation must happen.

Since the Haida Nation and Taku River Tlingit decisions in 2004, provincial governments (with the notable exception of British Columbia) accept, in principle, that the duty to consult applies to the Métis, although, in the case of Alberta, provincial consultation guidelines pertaining to the Métis are a long time in coming. The stakes are high for Métis communities. As we have seen, the issues extend beyond the impact of mining or petroleum projects. At the heart of Métis concerns are access to territory, control over resources, and the preservation of knowledge. Métis communities in western Canada often lack both the financial means and the human resources required for effective participation in all stages of the consultation process. Capacity building is therefore an issue. In addition, the Métis recognize the necessity of documenting the knowledge, practices, and land uses that will in turn allow them to think about the revitalization and sustainable development of their distinct culture.

At the Working Forum on the Duty to Consult, held in Edmonton in October 2009, the Métis participants agreed on the need to undertake holistic studies that consider not only the environmental impact of development but also the economic and social impact (Cosco 2009, 10). To this multidimensional framework, we must add a gendered component, so as to ensure that the perspectives and knowledge of Métis women are fully incorporated into the process. Nearly a decade ago, the Native Women’s Association of Canada (2007, 4) argued that “Aboriginal women must have sufficient capacity to ensure meaningful and effective participation at any legislative, administrative and policy regime affecting Indigenous and traditional knowledge.” Gender plays a critical role in determining who does what and who controls what in any given community. As historian and activist Andrea Smith reminds us, a critical interrogation of heteropatriarchy must be at the core of nation building, sovereignty, and social change (see Smith 2008, 255–72). The inclusion of women’s voices in the future definition of Métis rights will expand that definition to encompass rights pertaining to the protection of sacred sites, to water and food safety, and to the protection of natural habitats, as well as the right to continue to access all the resources of the land,
including plant life. Only through active participation, however, can Métis women take ownership of the processes of consultation and negotiation through which the collective identity of the Métis will be affirmed and their rights to the land defined.

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